

Serving Our Community Since 1975

Mr. Matthew Walsh
Director of Redevelopment, Downtown Services, and Special Projects
City of Concord
41 Green Street
Concord, NH 03301

July 24, 2020

Dear Mr. Walsh,

Please accept this request by Friends Program, Inc. to be considered for CDBG-CV1 funding on behalf of the Friends Program Senior Services and Youth Mentoring Program. We plan new efforts and continued service to respond the impacts of COVID-19 on our community's most vulnerable populations. The Friends Program is a non-profit agency that recruits, trains and manages volunteers to meet community needs. Our mission is to strengthen communities by building relationships that empower people, encourage community service and restore faith in the human spirit. We accomplish this by providing youth mentoring, emergency housing and fulfilling the need of seniors and retired people to actively contribute to the community.

In this proposal, we are requesting funds in the amount of **\$53,499** for two separate initiatives:

- **To provide technology and additional staffing to implement Youth Mentoring programming that encourages grade-level reading skills** amongst at-risk mentees in our program and other youth identified by local schools and youth organizations, and to support the continuation of site-and-community based wraparound services that staff provide to these low-income families during the pandemic
- **To continue and expand the efforts of volunteers participating in Senior Grocery Shopping**, a pandemic-response partnership originally formed between Capital Area Transit and Friends Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), to fill a service gap in providing at-risk seniors with groceries and basic necessities while they are unable to use public transit to complete their own shopping. While CAT has been cleared to resume service, many of these seniors are still high-risk and feel unsafe returning to "normal" life. Friends RSVP seeks to continue this program, as the need for the service is still prevalent and likely to rise as winter nears and COVID-19 cases may resurge.

Included with this letter is an abstract that outlines program implementation, the impacts of programming on the populations served, and a break-down of costs by program. We hope that the City of Concord will appreciate the importance of providing these services, and support our efforts to positively impact at-risk youth and seniors in the Greater Concord area during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to this proposal, we are submitting an additional letter seeking support for a collaborative effort between the Friends Program, Concord Coalition to End Homelessness, and Family Promise to provide long-term shelter decompression for families and individuals currently experiencing homelessness. On behalf of the Friends Program, I thank you for your consideration and time. We look forward to your response, and the opportunity to present our plans to the City Council.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Paul". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and contact information.

Nancy Paul
Executive Director
npaul@friendsprogram.org

PROPOSAL ABSTRACT

In this proposal, we are requesting funds in the amount of **\$53,499** for two separate initiatives:

- 1. To provide technology and additional staffing to implement Youth Mentoring programming that encourages grade-level reading skills** amongst the at-risk mentees and other Concord-area youth who are not currently involved in our programs, and to support the continuation of site-and-community based wraparound services that YM staff have been providing to these low-income families during the pandemic (such as applying for unemployment and addressing food-insecurity)

Through program funding provided by the CDBG-CV grant, the Friends Program Youth Mentoring staff and volunteers would be positioned to provide active extra support to youth mentees and their families. These various wraparound services are identified through Mentor's interactions with their mentees, and the staff's regular communications with families. These services include providing extra food or basic necessities to families who may be struggling economically due to COVID-19, coaching families through unemployment applications or other financial supports, helping families and kids adjust to remote learning and social-distancing, offering entertainment ideas and solutions, and providing guidance for families to adhere to pandemic-related CDC. Youth Mentoring coordinators are currently spending approximately 1/3 of their work hours providing these supports, and fall outside of their normal day-to-day tasks. Coordinators are also hosting monthly Zoom meetings for mentors to address any concerns or questions about providing effective mentoring in a virtual setting.

Youth Mentoring is seeking support in building upon an existing partnership with Cricket Together, a powerful 1:1 eMentoring program that mentors can use to read books with their mentees. By providing mentees with tablets and access to this program, mentors will be encouraging grade-level reading skills and supplementing possible gaps in educational supports due to the shutdowns. Youth, especially those in low-income families and backgrounds, who are unable to read at grade-level by the fourth grade are significantly less likely to complete their education. This is because 85% of all other subjects and class education is based around reading after the third-grade level. In addition, we can build students' internal confidence and self-esteem by eliminating stumbling and struggling to read at their peers' level.

The implementation of this programming would require the hiring of a part-time staff member. This coordinator would be tasked with scheduling mentor/mentee meeting times, working with families to ensure they have reliable internet access, and spreading awareness of the additional programming. This staff person would allow YM to expand this programming to students and other at-risk youth who are not currently serviced by Friends. These out-of-network students could include E.L.L students within the Concord School District, children in New American families, or other youths who require additional supports to maintain grade-level reading abilities.

(cont. on page 2)

- 2. To continue and expand the efforts of volunteers participating in Shopping for Seniors** pandemic-response partnership originally formed between Capital Area Transit and Friends Program. 

with groceries and basic necessities while they are unable to utilize public transit to complete their own shopping.

While CAT has been cleared to resume service, many of these seniors in Concord are still high-risk and feel unsafe returning to “normal” life. Friends RSVP seeks to continue this program, as the need for the service is still prevalent and likely to increase as winter nears and COVID-19 cases rise. Shopping for Seniors pairs homebound or high-risk seniors with a volunteer shopper, who picks up a list and form of payment, completes the shopping, and then delivers the groceries to their doorstep—at no additional cost to the senior. This allows the recipient to forgo the financial and technological strains of online services such as InstaCart.

Grant funding would be used for recruitment and background screening of eligible volunteers, and to supplement a federal grant specific to the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (limited to volunteers 55+). The additional funds from CDBG-CV would allow us to expand our volunteer pool to those younger than 55, who are significantly less at-risk than RSVP volunteers. The additional manpower would allow us to pick up donation bags from local food pantries, helping to reduce the financial burden on seniors who may be on fixed incomes. At the same time, this allows food pantries to expand their reach. To further close this financial gap, we are including a line item for purchasing grocery gift cards, which volunteers can use to cover grocery costs that may have gone beyond what a senior was able to provide. This has occurred many times in the four months that we have been providing this service, and has often been kindly covered by volunteers.

We also seek to implement mileage reimbursements to those picking up lists and delivering groceries, enhancing the appeal of the volunteer role to capture a broader volunteer pool. This allows us to meet the needs of more Concord-area seniors in a way that is mutually beneficial to each party.

There are some matching funds associated with this ask for any volunteers coordinated by RSVP staff. Our current matching portion of the RSVP grant is \$167,758.50 for the 18-month period outlined in the CDBG-CV funding.

Youth Mentoring Request Budget

ITEM	QTY	COST
Tablets for Cricket-Together	80 @ 79.99/each	\$7,200
PT Youth Mentoring Coordinator	18 Months @ 22.5 HR	\$29, 835
		TOTAL: \$37,035

Shopping for Seniors Request Budget

ITEM	QTY	COST
Background Checks	20 @ \$25/each	\$500
Mileage Reimbursment	\$0.58 @ 20mi/wk per volunteer	\$12,064
Grocery Cards	\$50/wk	\$3,900
		TOTAL: \$16,464

